

CORRESPONDENCE

Sterilization: Voluntary or Compulsory?

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—Fascism in operation gives little encouragement to the belief expressed by Mr. Thompson (January, 1934, page 289) that its methods are indispensable to advance the realization of eugenic ideals. The fanatical racialism which has driven into exile thousands of the best brains Germany possessed is calculated to impoverish rather than enrich the hereditary resources of that country. What sort of eugenics is it that regrets as biologically inferior its Einsteins, Habers and Bruno Walters? As one who has no Semitic ancestors (unless I must count Adam) I feel I should have been a much more worthy person if biological offscourings of the kind I have named had exchanged their genes with some of my forbears. Germany's experiments in eugenics deserve indeed our close attention. They provide for all time a magnificent example of how *not to do it*, an eternal warning against trying to solve eugenic problems with guts (a favourite Fascist remedy) instead of with brains.

The breakdown of the Draconic measures of compulsion instituted in Germany was sufficiently indicated in the observations by Dr. E. Mapother, referred to in the January REVIEW (page 218). But what else could one expect from trying to force sterilization on large numbers of people who regard it as a deadly sin, bringing with it damnation both in this world and in the next? The *reductio ad absurdum* of the compulsory system is that it destroys the possibility of securing what is indispensable to any sound attack whatsoever on eugenic problems—namely, an exact scientific knowledge of the personal familial and genetic factors involved.

We have just witnessed the collapse of an attempt to enforce "prohibition" in the U.S.A. That attempt was approved by a majority of the population. It broke down because the minority felt no moral obligation to observe a law which appeared to them an unwarranted invasion of their personal liberty. But compulsory sterilization encroaches much further upon personal freedom than did prohibition. To imagine an analogue to compulsory sterilization in that direction we must conceive not a system by which the drinker is compelled to abstain, but one by which the abstainer is forced to get drunk. If prohibition failed what chance of success has compulsory sterilization among people who regard it with religious abhorrence? The attempt to force it must ultimately fail, leaving a legacy of hatred, mistrust and fear of everything associated with the word eugenics.

The evil of compulsory measures is that they divert attention from the real problem—that of

implanting eugenic beliefs in the minds of men. Compulsion may determine submission, it cannot implant convictions. Eugenic progress under "voluntaryism," though less imposing outwardly, is more certain and less subject to setback. Freedom will rouse and speed convictions; force will create not convictions but resentments and hatreds. Nothing, indeed, could be better calculated to put eugenics among lost causes than to raise the cry that we would compel the minority before having converted the majority.

The truth is we have not yet even begun to apply voluntary measures in an effective way. How many towns have contraceptive clinics for women? Where can a person bearing hereditary weaknesses and defects get sterilized without prohibitive expense? When the State has given every child a sound groundwork of biological knowledge, including eugenics; when birth-control clinics are as numerous as elementary schools; when it is as easy to get sterilized as to be treated for venereal disease; and when these things have had a chance to root themselves, then it may be time to ask "Is voluntary sterilization sufficient?"

The task of the eugenic movement is to create a well-informed public opinion, common to all classes, creeds and parties, in favour of eugenic ideals, particularly in favour of preventing the multiplication of degeneracy and defect. Without such a public opinion compulsion would break down; with it compulsion (I believe and hope) would prove to be unnecessary.

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The Kenya Native

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—The successful sowing of a new idea must depend mainly upon a soil of flexible minds, and in this respect my good fortune was great during my visit to England, referred to in your editorial notes for January. I had, as you are aware, the great privilege of offering the results of a small research in Kenya to the collective and individual judgment of many eminent authorities, who, without exception, saw in the issues made evident by the research a high African and imperial importance. On the other hand, there has been some misunderstanding (and some misrepresentation) of the new idea. I ask leave, therefore, to try and restate it, and to do so apart from the questions of irrelevant or subsidiary interest discussed by writers to *The Times*. The idea is in fact twofold and may be best approached by its historical aspect.

Just a hundred years ago (August 28th, 1833, as every schoolboy knows) altruism began to dis-

place exploitation in British dealings with the African and has now become established in principle as trusteeship, in practice as a granting of equality of social opportunity to be the medium for the rise of the African. The merits and effects of this huge social experiment still await scientific study wherever, as in Kenya, British and African appear destined to live generation after generation in intimate contact with each other.

In 1929 the *Report of the Commission on Closer Union of the Dependencies in Eastern and Central Africa* was issued and remains witness to the prevailing thought and procedure of the day. Faced with the task of formulating a guide to the East African destiny of three races, the Commissioners speedily recognized that contact between black and white in Africa "constitutes one of the great problems of the twentieth century" (p. 8) to which "the question of the capacity of the native for progress is fundamental"; but that concerning this capacity there are "no strictly scientific grounds" on which "a judgment can be based" (p. 16). In this predicament—amazing as it may seem in these days of scientific progress—the Commission had no incentive to seek from without greater knowledge than it possessed, and science was not represented on it; even the confession of ignorance and the public plea already raised in Kenya for organized research into the fundamental native capacity went unheard, and the Commissioners proceeded to evolve a native policy out of their own opinions. These opinions placed "no limits to the possibilities of native advancement in education and civilization" (p. 235), but from "such evidence as is available" obtained "the suggestion that the general level of ability is at present higher in the white races than in the black" (p. 24), and definitely "would not close the door" to the ideal of the day when white and black "can meet on equal terms intellectually, socially, and economically" (p. 84).

It is desirable to note that the primary meaning given to *education* appears to have been scholastic, and that as usual the meaning of *civilization* was left vague; yet Professor McDougall had already provided a finely philosophic definition (*The Group Mind*, pp. 204-7), Professor Storck (*Man and Civilization*, p. 54) had arrived at a practical one (with a warning against using the word as an indiscriminate term of praise), and a member of the Commission itself, for whom I have deep respect, had queried in print the common assumption that European civilization is the best model of human excellence for the African. However much we may regret it, the popular British conception (reflected in the Commission's report) of the civilizing process in Africa still believes it conclusively illustrated by a native on a bicycle or by a negro school in the West performing a Greek play; and this belief unfortunately is too often accompanied by the assumption that our introduction into East Africa of the sores and burdens of

European civilization is inevitable, but is amply compensated for by the cultural benefits we bring.

Briefly, then, this historic Commission, in its great effort against heavy odds to establish a standard of social justice in East Africa, endorsed the doctrine of what Professor Hogben has called "mystical egalitarianism," and issued its recommendations in the conventional belief that racial backwardness is due wholly to environmental causes which are removable by education and civilization. No other conclusion was possible for it if no other views were heard by it.

The geneticist who has favoured me by reading so far will not now require me to state the idea. The whole of native policy is based on the old assumption that the desired advance of the native is a mere matter of *nurture*: by European administration, law, medicine, and education. The whole of the first element in the new idea depends on the biologically based belief that the desired advance is a great matter for sagacious selective knowledge: not only of past native nurture, but also of present native nature. We may thus feel that, while traditional policy relies entirely on changing the wheels, the new idea would make sure they are the right wheels and would also see if the engine requires attention. It is true that in voicing this simple idea I have given prominence to *nature* as a determining factor of mental capacity, because this factor had been altogether ignored in East Africa. Nevertheless, however incomplete my prolonged plea for native advance on a scientific basis may have been, I have stressed in it the inestimable importance of *nurture*, and in particular the enhancement of the value of education to be expected from scientific assurance that it is correct. It seems necessary to emphasize this because it is natural that some with strong convictions, and with years of devoted labour for the African behind them, may have found it almost impossible to welcome an idea which appears at first sight to disturb their established order of thought and action; and there may be in Great Britain educationists and others with no first-hand African knowledge, to whom a dream of a laborious orientation, and perhaps of a new compass course, brought unconscious results well known in everyday psychology. Happily, ample grounds may be found for confidence that the interests of truth and progress are humanly safe in the flexible and in the young, scientific mind.

The second element of the new idea has even less claim to be considered altogether new. It is not generally appreciated in England that in East Africa there is no accepted standard of *nurture*; the wheels are not all alike. Multiplicity of motive and methods with confusion of aim, distressing as it may sound, will not surprise those who agree that our national altruism can ill afford to refuse scientific assistance. On this subject wise words came in 1931 from Lord Dawson in his address on "Medicine and Statesmanship," vigorous words

from the late Sir Walter Fletcher on "Biology and Statecraft." In Kenya, Sir Edward Grigg, our Governor at the time, was the first to support the suggestion in 1926 for a collaborative team research on a liberal scale into the nature and nurture of the native: in other words, into the condition we call racial backwardness. This proposal, the second element of the "new idea," is in fact a revival in East Africa of the plea made on behalf of the West by Mary Kingsley, for the aid of science to develop the African into a worthy citizen. In the interval of thirty-three years, Mary Kingsley's words have been forgotten but vindicated over and over again by the increased power of science to assist and by the course of things without that assistance. What man or woman who has given knowledge and thought to consideration of the interests of the African can doubt that those interests require the best that science can give? In that belief my appeal when in London extended from the door of the scientist to that of the statesman. To statesmanship the appeal continues that "It may wake and understand" and then "With knowledge use a *painless* hand." Trusteeship for the native makes great demands: from the way in which we understand and meet its difficulties and duties our assumption of it may be judged.

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In- and out-breeding

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—I feel compelled to take issue with the unscientific manner in which Mr. A. M. Ludovici and Dr. K. B. Aikman attempt to prove, in two articles in the October number, the social desirability—indeed the indispensability—of avoiding racial crosses in man; and against their pseudo-scientific case for racial purity and inbreeding.

One may agree, for the sake of argument, that relative inbreeding may have advantages when practised by good stocks carrying few recessive genes for defects (assuming that the latter can be certainly known beforehand, which is usually impossible). But why must the advantages of inbreeding be supported by numerous illogical lines of reasoning, by unfounded inferences from history, by irrelevant quotations from so-called "authorities," many of whom, far from being authorities on the subject discussed, are merely occasional observers of the phenomenon in question? Mr. Ludovici and Dr. Aikman make so many statements that are either unfounded in fact or false in inference that it would require almost as much space as they use (15 pp.) to expose their errors and fallacies. I shall not transgress upon your space to that extent, but confine my efforts to indicating a few of their more fundamental errors, fallacies and unproved statements.

Dr. Ludovici's thesis is this: "Culture, in so far as it is social harmony and order, must be the product of an ordered, harmonious man" (p. 147). Inbreeding alone furnishes this harmonious man. Outbreeding causes disharmony of characteristics. These, in turn, lead only to social decay. If we are to avoid social chaos and disharmony we must prevent all unions which are not closely related biologically. Such is the thesis.

It is not new. Indeed it has been refuted so often that only a novelist might be expected to marshal courage sufficient to revive it.

Minor points in the thesis are as follows: Early cultures were harmonious. The reason: inbreeding. Modern culture is disharmonious. Reason: little inbreeding, much crossing. Not only were early cultures "extremely harmonious . . . but our own culture owes what little beauty and harmony it possesses entirely [*sic*] to them" (p. 147). All the great early cultures were either naturally or artificially confined geographically. This made inbreeding necessary.

Now it ought to be clear without detailed proof that (1) not all early great cultures were so confined; (2) that they were not all incestuous as Mr. Ludovici suggests by presenting hand-picked evidence; (3) that we do not owe the harmony existing between our social institutions (whatever the degree of harmony posited as representing reality) solely to these early civilizations.

What does Mr. Ludovici mean by disharmony of inheritance in man caused by lack of inbreeding, or, if you prefer, by outbreeding? Simply that a man has a colon too long for his stature, or that his lower jaw does not fit perfectly with his upper, etc. Assuming that Mr. Ludovici has shown that such defects are due to racial crossing alone and that they could not have appeared in an inbred stock (which is unproved), he has not furnished an iota of evidence that present maladjustments in social institutions are due exclusively, or even primarily or at all, to physical disharmonies in man. Here are two important gaps—especially the latter—which Mr. Ludovici has made no effort to fill. Yet proof of this is logically necessary for the presentation of a valid case for his untenable hypothesis.

Mr. Ludovici posits an instinct toward homogeneity (p. 148)—a mere figment of creative imagination! Mr. Ludovici says that only by "a stroke of luck" (p. 148) can mixed breeding furnish a harmonious inheritance. How any observer of man's physique, realizing the heterogeneous nature of most matings, can make such a statement, I find it difficult to understand. Does Mr. Ludovici mean to say that 999 people out of 1,000 are disharmonious physically?

No informed writer has contended that inbreeding *per se* resulted necessarily in biological deterioration; and the space which Mr. Ludovici devotes to refuting the contrary is so much wasted effort. But because inbreeding is not bad *per se* is